

Hindsight by vcatrashfiend

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Summary: Jonathan has a bad date with Mogen David, and Hopper helps him pick up the pieces. Post Stranger Things Season One.

Hindsight

Note: A one shot originally posted on AO3 and my tumblr strangerthingsfics. All characters belong to The Duffer Brothers.

Hindsight

Jim Hopper traced a finger along the delicate jawline of a sleeping Joyce Byers, and felt the brobdingnagian weight on his broad shoulders continue to lift. She wasn't a beautiful sleeper- one of those serene lasses that conducted their repose in a manner that suggested that an artist was studying them from the end of the bed- she snored, and she thrashed, and she often stole the covers... but he was privileged enough to be able to witness it. Her nights- usually three out of the week- were his.

This had been their custom since New Year's Eve. Will and Jonathan had gone to the Wheelers, and Jim had impulsively asked Joyce to be his date a party thrown by the Hawkins Police Department down at the local VFW. It had been a question that they had both been dancing on the edge of since Will had been rescued from *that* place. There had been drinking, but not too much; dancing, although they did not participate until the final slow dance before the countdown... and then there had been a kiss.

Their New Year's kiss had been chaste... at first. They were participants in an age old ritual, everyone tried to steal a kiss to ring in a new year. It was fun, and silly... until it became a realization. Eventually- after several minutes of breathless grasping and groping- they realized that they were standing in the middle of the dance floor, pawing at each other in full view of his work colleagues. He set her down on unsteady legs, took her by the hand, and they left the party so that they could continue the conversation elsewhere. That elsewhere had been in his car, when the tension had become unbearable, and then- after a fashion- her bedroom. Afterwards, Joyce remarked that so much had changed since they were in high school, acting as rebounds from breakups with Lonnie and Chrissy Carpenter. Jim nodded, chuckled and replied, "Yeah, your boobs are definitely bigger."

Will and Jonathan took the news of their mother's new relationship very well. Both boys looked on Jim with gratitude tinged with more than a little hero worship. He wasn't Lonnie, which Jim suspected counted for a lot in regards to their welcome attitudes. He continued the already established goodwill by displaying an aptitude for Calculus that lifted Jonathan's somewhat dismal grade in the course, and occasionally joining in on Will, Lucas, Dustin and Mike's "Dungeons and Dragons" games; smuggling in Forbidden After Seven Thirty fare like soda pop and assorted Hostess cakes.

The past few months had been – aside from his "moonlighting" gig for the Hawkins Institute – positively idyllic. Although he felt ages from admitting it, he loved Joyce and her boys. Years and years ago, the sting of Joyce leaving him for Lonnie had stayed with him. When he came back to Hawkins- after his daughter's death and his divorce- that resentment remained until the day she stormed into his office, demanding to be believed. Demanding to be heard. Demanding to be let back into his life. He thought his weakness lie in the booze and pills he poured into his body to keep him numb. It had always been her.

So, that was that. He was most decidedly a mainstay in her life, and the lives of her boys. He was drinking less, smiling more, and finding himself quite comfortable for the most part. Joyce's snoring was terrible though, and it was keeping him up on this particular night. He leaned over to kiss her cheek and whisper, "Babe, take it down a notch. Some of us have to defend this fair city in the morning", which got him a sleepy little smile, a derisive snort, and a few minutes respite. He found himself drifting back to sleep, playing Big Spoon to Joyce's restless Little Spoon.

A noise from the front door caused Jim to jolt into consciousness. He quickly sat up in the bed, waiting to see if he had just imagined the sound. It sounded like someone was trying to break in, and was doing it as loudly as they could. Joyce whimpered, and started to stir.

"Shhh..." Jim placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Go back to sleep."

Once he was assured that she had fallen back asleep, he got up from the bed, grabbed his gun from the holster that lay on top of Joyce's

dresser, and crept slowly and silently through the hallway.

Apart from Joyce and himself, the house was empty for the night. Will was at the Wheelers; Jonathan was at some sort of Junior Lock-in at the school, of all things. Jim was pretty sure Jonathan hated most of his classmates; it was beyond him why anyone would want to be forced to stay inside of a school overnight with them. Odd times, indeed.

Jim pressed his back against the wall to the left of the front door, and slowly reached a hand out to open it and catch the intruder by surprise. The door suddenly stopped rattling, and there was a dull thudding noise from outside of it, as though someone had fallen to the ground. Jim acted, throwing open the door, and stepping outside, aiming his gun at the body on the ground. He lowered it when he realized it was Jonathan who was sprawled out on the front porch, flailing his arms and legs like an amateur swimmer. A very inebriated Jonathan.

"Kid, you reek like malt liquor."

"S'mad... dog..." Jim blanched at Jonathan's mutterings, feeling his stomach sour and churn in empathy for the poor bastard. A night with Mogen David was not for the faint of heart. He placed his hands under Jonathan's armpits and foisted the boy onto his feet, catching him as he fell sideways.

"Your mom is not gonna like this."

Jonathan whimpered helplessly against Jim's shoulder. "No... don't tell."

"What the hell happened, kid?" Jim inquired as he half dragged the positively soused teen into the house and placed him on the couch.

"I just like her so much, Hop," Jonathan whined into one of Joyce's throw pillows. Ah, this was about Nancy Wheeler. Jim covered Jonathan with a blanket, propped his head on the pillow, and went to the kitchen to get him a tall glass of water, some aspirin, and the mop bucket from under the sink. When he returned, Jonathan was staring up at him with one of the most pathetically hang dog

expressions he had ever seen.

"Try to sit up for a minute and take your medicine." Jonathan complied. "Did Harrington supply the party favors for this pity party?" He hadn't. Jonathan managed to explain that he tried to have fun at the lock-in, but Nancy and Steve had been acting so lovey-dovey that he just couldn't take it. Apparently, when they disappeared backstage in the school auditorium, leaving Jonathan with a few of their friends, he decided to get the hell out of dodge, and take some liquid courage with him. The liquor had been from the principal's office, in the utility closet where the contraband was kept. How he managed to break into the office and the closet, he didn't tell Jim. He had been drinking alone, by the quarry for hours, and had finally decide to come home with his tail between his legs, his pride shattered. The story was all too familiar to Jim, and he genuinely felt for the poor kid.

"You're going to have some more water, and I'm going to mix some apple cider vinegar into the next glass. Then I'm going to bed, and you're going to bed, and I'm going to take you out for some greasy omelets, coffee, and American fries tomorrow morning. We'll have a good talk, and you'll feel like a new man for your shift tomorrow night."

"I wish I hadn't done that... wish I hadn't stole that dreck," Jonathan slurred before vomiting into the bucket, his broad shoulders heaving from the effort. Jim patted him on the shoulder, and said the only thing that came to mind:

"Well, hindsight is MD 20/20."